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XII.—A BYZANTINE SOURCE FOR GUILLAUME
DE LORRIS'S *ROMAN DE LA ROSE*

The poet of the *Roman de la Rose* dreamed one May morning that he came to a park wall decorated with allegorical representations of vices and defects. And when he entered the park he found there a company of dancers, whose individual members also represented different human attributes. With this company was the God of Love, and his attendant who carried his bows and arrows. So that when the dances had ended and the poet went on to explore the park, the god and his squire followed him. They soon found a spring, bubbling up under a pine, with a curb on which was written: "Here the beautiful Narcissus died." In the spring's depths they could see two stones, like crystal, that changed their color under the sun's rays and reflected all the park round about. This was the water where Cupid had sowed the seeds of love, the famous Fountain of Love,

Dont plusors ont en maint endroit
Parlé, en romans et en livre. (ll. 1606, 1607)

This spring proved the undoing of the poet. For as he looked down into it, he saw mirrored there rose bushes surrounded by brambles, and when he saw them he felt at once that he must pluck at least one of the roses for its perfume's sake, one bud in particular, which tempted him because it was so pink and straight and fragrant. But when he went to get the bud he ran against its wall of thistles, nettles, thorns and briars.

Here was the god's opportunity. Seizing an arrow from his squire he shot it full at the poet. It pierced him to the heart, and he fell in a faint. Reviving, however,

he tried again to reach the bud. A second arrow hit him, and a third, but rallying from each wound he still struggled on. At last he could breathe in the fragrance of the flower, but only when his strength was spent, and he had been forced to yield to Cupid's power. So he surrendered his heart as a hostage, received the god's commands, and with them the solace granted to faithful lovers.

The commands given, the god vanished, and the poet turned once more toward the rose. The hedge parted before him, he was about to pull the bud even, when its warden rushed out at him and pushed him back. But he would not retreat, even though Reason plead with him. New friends came to his aid. Again he drew near the rose. Only Bel-Accueil's opposition prevented him from kissing it. But while they were arguing, Venus, with a torch,

. . . dont la flame

A eschauffée mainte dame, (ll. 3435, 3436)

so warmed Bel-Accueil that he gave way. The kiss was taken, and at once there entered the poet's body a perfume which drove away all grief.

Still the battle was not wholly won. The foes of true love rose against the lover. Dire was his strait for all the bud's sweetness. Worst of all, Jealousy now joined his enemies, had a moat dug about the bushes, a turreted bastion built, and within the bastion a tower, where he imprisoned Bel-Accueil, while the lover was left alone outside the gates to lament his friend's captivity and the new turn given to Fortune's wheel.

The essential features of this picture are evident: the wall with its personifications, the park with its flowers and birds, the Fountain of Love with its stones of different colors and its glassy depths, and the roses behind a thorny hedge, which holds the lover back from them. The God

of Love plays a leading part in the action, and the solution—a temporary one—is brought about by Venus's torch. Medieval symbolism and ancient mythology blend here in a most unexpected way.

And should we ask the question: Where did this blending take place? did Guillaume de Lorris make it or another?, we have in favor of Guillaume de Lorris his two lines:

La matire en est bone et noeve, (l. 39)

Et la matire en est novele, (l. 2096)

as well as the absence of such conceptions from French and Latin literature before his day. Against his claim to the making would stand the passage where he says that the Fountain of Love was already famous "en romans et en livre," and the metaphor of the hedge-protected rose maiden, which had already done service in Gautier of Arras's *Eracle*.

Another comparison comes to mind that may throw a little light on the matter. The company which was found dancing caroles by the poet was composed of abstractions and qualities. Yet it was dancing genuine dances, and with evolutions and songs which recall the movements and songs of the caroles described in *Guillaume de Dole*, some thirty years before. The dancers of this older poem were courtiers, their dances were the fashionable steps of the day, so that as far as fiction can be real what they executed was real. And yet their pastime resembles the pastime of the personifications of the *Roman de la Rose*, resembles it so strongly that we naturally wonder whether their story was not known to Guillaume de Lorris, and whether he was not making a clever adaptation of it at this point. A conjecture which gives rise to a second one. The court poem

of which we are speaking was not known to its hearers by the name of *Guillaume de Dole*. This title is recent. But the poem had a name of its own, one given it by its author, and which he took pains to weave into its lines, the name of *Roman de la Rose*, after a birthmark on its heroine.

So our dance scenes were not new, and perhaps the name was not new, and it may be that the "matire," of which Guillaume de Lorris boasts, refers not to this novel adaptation of court poetry, nor yet to his allegory, but to the way he handles the precepts of love which the God of Love lays down for the lover. These precepts were drawn from Ovid, with more or less elaboration, and may be new in that they appear in vernacular fiction for the first time, perhaps, and thus reach a wider audience than their sponsors of the schools had reached before. Or they may have been new in that they are put here in the mouth of the God of Love himself, instead of claiming the conventional authority of the Roman poet. But whatever the meaning of Guillaume de Lorris's words may be, we can feel assured that he is dealing fairly with his readers. His allusion to his indebtedness for the notion of the Fountain of Love should of itself establish his reputation for honesty. Of this fountain no critics yet have found a trace, and his confession of borrowing, therefore, seems to us entirely gratuitous, though of course his immediate readers may have understood the reference.

But would they be conscious of any dissimulation in regard to the central idea of the *Roman de la Rose*, the notion of a rose maiden protected against enterprising suitors by a paling or hedge? This metaphor had been already used in French poetry, though only incidentally, and it had been enforced by the subsidiary conceit of comparing maidens to roses. Why then did not Guillaume de Lorris mention this use? Undoubtedly because he was

ignorant of it. Sixty years had surely passed since Gautier of Arras had written his *Eracle*, and the literary public he addressed at that time may have had no relation at all to the later public of Guillaume de Lorris.¹ And the same assumption is probably true of the reference made to the perfume of a rose, which might have been also found in *Guillaume de Palerne*, of the last decade of the twelfth century. There the lover sees his mistress coming to him in a dream and giving him a rose, the odor of which banishes all his care.²

To other striking features of the *Roman de la Rose*, however, such as the park wall with its allegorical features and the hunting down of the lover by the God of Love, the literature of the West had not made any reference. Before Guillaume de Lorris they are not so much as hinted at. Yet they had their being, had indeed already attained expression in romantic composition, in the East and in the Greek tongue.

¹ It may be well to quote Gautier's metaphor again:

Je ne vi onques nule tour
Rendre sanz plait et sanz estour.
Eracles voit bien que li rose
N'est pas de tel paliz enclose
Qu'il s'en fust pour fol tenuz
Teus qui peust estre venuz. (*Eracle*, ll. 2394-99)

And his comparisons:

Mais que l'ortie est od le rose. (do., l. 2508)
N'affert pas a l'empereur
Qu'il ait l'ortie entour la fleur. (do., ll. 2510, 2511)
Sire, ne malmetez le rose. (do., l. 3136)

Cf. *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn.*, XXIII (1908), pp. 278-283.

² Tantost com recevoit la flor,
Ne sentoît paine ne dolor,
Travail, grevance ne dehait.

(*Guillaume de Palerne*, ll. 1455-57)

Cf. *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn.*, loc. cit., p. 282, n.

In the last quarter of the twelfth century a Byzantine writer, Eustathius Macrembolites, had tempted fame with his novel of *Hysmene and Hysmenias*.³ The story, as a whole, is a fairly close imitation of Achilles Tatius's *Clitophon and Leucippe*, but other influences were at work on its author, and prompted him to introduce into the first part of his romance material which was quite foreign to the traditional Greek tale of love and adventure.⁴ He followed Achilles Tatius's example, however, in making his hero the spokesman of his experiences from the beginning.

He, Hysmenias, had been sent to the city of Aulicomis as a herald of Zeus, and was entertained at the house of Hysmene's father, Sosthenes, during his stay. A beautiful park adjoined the house, and in the park was an elaborately carved stone fountain. One of its ornaments was a pillar of many colored stone, forming its center. The bottom of the fountain was so cut as to give the appearance of constant motion to its water.⁵ Ivory couches had been set near it, where the meals were served, with Hysmene acting as cup-bearer.

Hysmenias's first visit, the morning after his arrival, was to the park. He found it inclosed by a wall decorated with allegorical personages. There were four virgins, in symbolical dress, and having symbolical attributes, above whose heads were written the names: Prudence, Valor, Temperance, Justice. After them came a chariot bearing

³ Cf. R. Hercher's edition in his *Erotici Scriptores Graeci*, vol. II, pp. 161-286. A document of 1186 may refer to this Eustathius (K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, pp. 764-766).

⁴ This material lasts through half of the story, to the eighth chapter of the Sixth Book, or to page 219 of Hercher's edition.

⁵ A poem of Nicetas Euganianus, who was a contemporary of Eustathius, but somewhat his senior, furnishes the direct model for this fountain, without much doubt, but both park and spring go back to Achilles Tatius. (*Clitophon and Leucippe*, Book I, c. 15)

a naked winged boy. In one hand he held a bow, in the other a torch. At his side he carried a quiver and a sword. About him all people and nations were gathered adoring, and also two women, one in white, the other in black. Behind the people came all kinds of fishes, birds, and animals, and one and all, man and beast, did homage to the boy. For he was Eros, whom all creatures serve, who conquers men by weapons, women by flame, birds by arrows, and through his nakedness rules the sea. The two women typified day and night.⁶

The day passed. That night, the second of his visit, Hysmenias had a dream. Before him stood the naked boy, heaping reproaches on him for scorning his power and proving insensible to the charms of his servant, Hysmene. But while the god was speaking Hysmene herself appeared, with a rose in her hand. She begged Eros to spare Hysmenias for her sake, and the god yielded after much entreaty, dropped a rose on the dreamer and vanished. So the vision ended.

Hysmenias, now wide awake, lost no time in seeking out his friend, Kratisthenes, and telling him what he had seen. Eros, he said, had emptied his quiver into him, and had burned his heart with flame (important incidents, which Eustathius had not mentioned before in the account of the

⁶ The immediate source of these ideas—nonsensical in some of their explanations—I have not found. Eros's emblems, less the sword, could derive from *Clitophon and Leucippe* (II, c. 4, 5), which also attributes Eros's power over birds to his wings (possibly the starting-point of his power over fishes in Eustathius), and vaunts his sway over animals, plants, and even over stones and streams (I, c. 17). Among the paintings described by Achilles Tatius is a portrait of Eros. Yet he does not attempt allegory, however well some of his pages might lend themselves to it. Perhaps some allegorized revision of *Clitophon and Leucippe* underlies Eustathius's bewildering conceptions.

dream). Eros had even overcome Zeus in him. Eros had besieged and taken him. "Once I was the fountain of Zeus," he declared, "full of virgin graces, but now Eros is making me flow away into the fountain of Aphrodite Once my head was crowned with laurel, but now with roses." ⁷

Subsequent nights brought new visions. In his waking hours Hysmenias would ever return to the wall and worship Eros's image there. And as he worshipped he became aware of additional devotees of the god, all in symbolical attire, the twelve calendar months, for instance, each represented with its proper attributes, according to its season.⁸ One night a sound from the park awoke him. He went out and found Hysmene by the spring. Emboldened by the hour, he kissed her, and embraced her with such sighing that she asked: "Do your lips give you pain?" And he, "Though you sting me like a bee, and though you protect the hive and wound the harvester of the honey, still shall I press on to the hive, enduring the pain, and garner in the honey harvest. For the sting will no more rob me of the sweetness than the rose's thorn will keep me away from the rose." ⁹

⁷ Eustathius's text for the first section of our quotation reads: Δὸς ἐγὼ πηγὴ μεστὴ χάριτων παρθενικῶν · ἀλλ' ἔρως πρὸς πηγὴν Ἀφροδίτης μετοχετεύει με. Book III, c. 2 (Hercher's edition, p. 180, ll. 23, 24).

⁸ Here we reach solid ground. Allegorical treatment of the months of the year was a favorite theme among the Byzantines. Theodorus Prodomos († a. 1159) had recently attempted it. It arrives in our romance quite belated, as we see, coming in long after the other descriptions and in no way connected with them. So we would assume that the presence of the months is due to Eustathius's desire to make the list of his personifications complete.—For the months in Byzantine literature, see Krumbacher, *op. cit.*, pp. 753, 754.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, Book IV, c. 22 (Hercher's edition, p. 200, ll. 9, 10).

Another night Hysmenias could not sleep for love. Hysmene's couch was near, and he went to it. She permitted his fondling but resisted his desire, begging him to spare her, lest he "pluck the ears before harvest time," lest he "pull the rose before it peeps out of its calyx." "For when the crop is whitening," she added, "then you may pluck the ears, and when the rose peeps from its calyx then you may pull it . . . Toward you I am a sleepless warden, a wall of stone not to be attempted, a paling not to be scaled."¹⁰ And the metaphor once broached, Hysmene does not fail to return to it, as in the stolen interview, where she says: "Hysmenias, you have lovingly cherished me, this Hysmene of yours, like a garden, and you have put around me, the garden, a paling, lest the hand of the wayfarer pluck me."¹¹

Both metaphor and allegory suddenly stop here. The remainder of the romance tells of nothing but the risks which the lovers run after their inevitable separation. All notion of personification or symbolism seems wholly forgotten. Even when Hysmene and Hysmenias successfully triumph over all those perils which the Greek novel of antiquity took delight in enumerating, and at last find themselves safe and sound in Aulicomis again, to be married in that park where they first met, even then Eustathius does not yield to the temptation of rounding out his abandoned imagery with the winding-up of his love story. A curious neglect and one that does not give us a high appreciation of the author's mental and literary endowments.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, Book v, c. 17 (Hercher, p. 212). The original for the last sentence quoted above is: Ἐγὼ σοι φύλαξ ἀκοίμητος, ἀπαρעγγέλρητος αἵμασι καὶ φραγμὸς ἀνεπίβατος (ll. 21, 22).

¹¹ . . . σὺ τὴν σὴν ταύτην Ὑσμίνην ἐρωτικῶς κατεκῆπευσας · σὺ μοι καὶ φραγμὸν περιέθου τῷ κήπῳ, μὴ χεὶρ ὁδοιποροῦντος τρυγήσῃ με. *Op. cit.*, Book vi, c. 8 (Hercher's edition, p. 218, ll. 30-32).

Yet this negligence helps us somewhat in divining Eustathius's plan for the first part of his novel. Allegory was fashionable in his day. He would seek popular favor by fusing it with a romantic narrative of the accepted kind, and thus heighten interest in his story. He borrowed the description of the calendar months, as we have seen. The inference is wholly warranted that the main body of his symbolism was borrowed too. But he grew tired of this departure from the beaten path. It involved too much planning on his part to carry it through, and so he dropped it when the action required the separation of the lovers and their departure from the park. Consequently, did we know the allegorical literature of Byzantium of the twelfth century, we might expect to find there in full the images and metaphors of *Hysmene and Hysmenias*, and probably within the limits of one and the same composition too—always excepting the picture of the months. And we might almost feel assured that the park wall with its personifications, the God of Love in pursuit of his victims, the fountain of Venus, and a rose maiden protected by a paling, were figures already familiar to the literary public of the Eastern Empire.

That the allegorical element in Eustathius enjoyed an existence apart from the narrative seems to result also from an analysis of Guillaume de Lorris's poem. Nowhere in the incidents of the *Roman de la Rose* can the slightest trace of the notions of the Greek novel be detected. The similarity between the two compositions begins and ends with their images. Therefore Guillaume de Lorris would not have taken these images from *Hysmene and Hysmenias*. He simply followed a source which Eustathius had used many years before. If we do not admit this solution, we must suppose that these peculiar ideas and conceits were twice invented independently at approximately the same

time. A common model for the two authors is clearly the more reasonable conclusion.

Now in its broader lines, the interpretation of this model by our two imitators, or the copy of it made by each—however we may prefer to put it—is fairly identical. In their treatment of the theme of the park wall, of the acts of the God of Love, or the defense of the rose maiden, they differ but little. The defense, in the one case, to be sure, is in words, in the other in material, but the symbols are the same. In other features, less essential to the action, they sometimes disagree. We can hardly reconcile Eustathius's Fountain of Aphrodite with Guillaume de Lorris's Fountain of Love. For the latter means a real spring, bearing that name, while the former is a purely rhetorical phrase, to represent Hysmenias's change of purpose. Could these terms be discovered elsewhere in literature, whether of the East or West, we should not be so tempted to connect them here. Guillaume de Lorris's phrase is perfectly natural, requiring no explanation. Eustathius's is entirely artificial. It is possible that he also had a spring before him, but he rejected the substance to retain only the symbolical meaning.

For Eustathius has a real spring in his park to which he does not give a name but which he describes with considerable detail. One of its features is a pillar of variegated stone. Now Guillaume de Lorris saw in the bottom of the Fountain of Love two stones which changed color in the sunlight. The same idea, you say. Yet Guillaume de Lorris adds that this fountain reflected the park around it, while no such property is attributed to the spring of Eustathius. But if you turn to Achilles Tatius, who at this place is the ultimate original for *Hysmene and Hysmenias*, you will find that the spring he describes does

possess this power.¹² On the other hand, he does not mention that its stone work could change color. So in one interesting attribute of the fountain the older Greek novelist agrees with the French poet against his own descendant, while in another the medieval authors agree with each other against the ancient.

It is much more easy to harmonize the different versions of the pursuit of the heroes by the God of Love. In Eustathius the god is a mural painting, endowed with life only in Hysmenias's dreams. For Guillaume de Lorris he is always alive, and he plays an important part in the action. In either story he subdues the hero. His arrows wound Hysmenias, his torch burns him.¹³ The lover of the *Roman de la Rose* falls under Cupid's darts also, but he is not burned by Cupid's torch, because that god does not carry a torch. The torch is there, however, in Venus's hands, and it decides the wooing, not by burning the lover but the lover's friend, Bel-Accueil, who had been opposing the lover's desire for a kiss. This transfer of Cupid's attribute to his mother, and the test of that attribute on some one who is neither the lover nor the loved one, are not explained. Guillaume de Lorris knew, as well as any one, that all tradition was against him in both instances. Why he violated that tradition we do not know, but it may be permissible to suppose that the error came to him from his source and, like the average poet in the vernacular, he dared not change what he had received. Now if this supposition is tenable it might indicate the nature of his source as oral rather

¹² *Clitophon and Leucippe*, Book I, c. 15, ¶6. Cf. *Roman de la Rose*, ll. 1557-60.

¹³ These details appear only in Hysmenias's account of his dream, as we have seen, but must have been given at length in Eustathius's source, here very clumsily abridged.

than written, for such a glaring error would hardly have remained uncorrected in a written text.

Still, whatever its form may have been for Guillaume de Lorris, he must have reproduced his source with greater fidelity in some important particulars than Eustathius had done. The latter almost wrecks his allegory by proportioning it among the sleeping and waking hours of Hysmenias. There results a division of the subject which does not make for clarity. Guillaume de Lorris, on the other hand, continues his dream from beginning to end, making his allegory hold in one uninterrupted vision. This arrangement seems much the more natural. It is also the manner of the regular vision literature of the Middle Ages. So that the burden of proof for violating it rests on Eustathius. And here we must not forget that the Greek author was trying to bend his images to the requirements of an established style of composition, a conventional romantic narrative. Consequently he was often obliged to weigh his course. He had no desire to teach, to point a moral. He felt compelled to lend his story as life-like a color as the novelists who had preceded him. The allegory for him was a pure embellishment. He could not allow it to affect the tenor of his substance. Therefore he would divide it among alternating periods of dream and dialogue, a procedure more vivid, more real than the form of a continuous vision. And, as we have seen, he wearied of this gratuitous task, to revert to the simple novelistic standard.

He not only wearied of his symbolism, he handled it badly. Take the rose scene in Hysmenias's first dream. Eros is upbraiding the dreamer when Hysmene appears with a rose. She defends him to the god, who gives way to her entreaties, and vanishes. But as he vanishes he drops a rose on the sleeper. Of Hysmene no further men-

tion. There is no reason in this solution. Hysmene should have bestowed the rose. The true version comes out in *Guillaume de Palerne*, where the mistress gives the rose to her suitor, whose grief is assuaged by its perfume. And this version is indirectly confirmed by the account of how the bud's perfume soothes the lover in the *Roman de la Rose*.

Yet for all his bungling Eustathius has done the important service of indicating quite definitely the scenery and leading conceits of Guillaume de Lorris's poem. In some particulars the identification is unmistakable. In others, as the spring in the park and the metaphor of the rose maiden, we feel that Eustathius has transformed concrete images, objective if you will, into empty rhetoric. But he affords us, even here, an intelligible glimpse of his pattern, the pattern to be of Guillaume de Lorris. And through what he has borrowed from it for the ornamentation of his novel, we are enabled to determine the approximate date as well as the probable content of that pattern.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that shortly after the middle of the twelfth century this allegory of a park, with its wall of personifications, its Fountain of Love, its description of the pursuit of the lover by the God of Love, and its rose of a maiden protected by a paling, or thorns, travelled from East to West and became known to court poets of France. From it Gautier of Arras drew his picture of the rose maiden, and drew directly, if we may give any heed to his agreement with Eustathius on the word "paling," as against Guillaume de Lorris's hedge.¹⁴ From it too the poet of *Guillaume de Palerne* drew his scene of the gift of the rose, where he also agrees with Eustathius

¹⁴ Yet Gautier also speaks of the nettle with the rose. See note 1 above.

as to the incidents of the gift, but with Guillaume de Lorris as to its effect.

However, had Guillaume de Lorris not incorporated the larger part, perhaps the whole, of this allegory into his poem, these minor loans of his older colleagues would have stood for individual fancies solely, and received only a passing comment. Even more, Eustathius's labored efforts to put life into the traditional Greek romance by his borrowed imagery would have escaped serious notice.¹⁵ It was Guillaume de Lorris who rescued the fading story from oblivion. And he did not simply rescue it. He restored it. He created it again. By using it as a frame and support for the analysis of those emotions which speed up or retard the progress of love, he won for it a larger public and assured for it a far-reaching career.

F. M. WARREN.

¹⁵ Dunlop and his reviser are hardly conscious of them (*History of Fiction*, new edition, London, 1888, vol. 1, p. 80).